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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SUBJECT: "Floors and Rugs in Summer". Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletins available: "Floors and Floor Coverings," and "Clothes Moths and their Control".

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The mailman brought me a letter yesterday from a radio friend up in Wisconsin. I'll read it to you.

"When I began taking up my rugs for the summer, I noticed that they are becoming worn in spots. As I haven't had them many years, it seems much too soon for them to show wear. They were expensive rugs and I am afraid I have not been giving them the right care. Won't you explain to me, Aunt Sammy, why rugs wear out? Please tell me also how to care for them properly."

Rugs are sufficiently expensive, as my friend says, to make it worth any housekeeper's time to give them good care--summer or winter, spring or fall. It is often the small, easily-avoided things that make them wear out. Generally the housekeeper can prolong their life, if she will but take the trouble.

There is the matter of cleaning, for example. Dirt and grit play havoc with the pile of the rug when they become imbedded in it. That heavy, sandy, gritty dirt that comes in on our shoes from the street and rubs off on the rug, is soon trampled deep into the weave. If such dirt is left in, it may cut the fibres of the foundation threads by constant rubbing. So to save the rug, let's choose a thorough and safe method of removing this destructive dirt.

In the old days when carpeting was firmly tacked down over padding linings, it usually was left to catch dust and germs until housecleaning time. Those days are gone. Gone also are those difficult and dusty methods of cleaning carpets that were used in the old days. A broom that raised clouds of dust from the surface, but couldn't get at the underside and a carpet sweeper that only picked up the litter from the top of the rug were the utensils relied on for the regular cleaning of the tacked-down carpet.

Today we clean both sides of our floor coverings. Dirt is no longer allowed to gather underneath. And our modern cleaning methods are easier on the housewife, are more healthful, more thorough, and better for the rug itself.

What is the best cleaning method? Time was when beating rugs was one sure event on the semi-annual housecleaning program. A big rug-beater made of wire or rattan and often several small beaters were part of the household cleaning equipment. Ask most men today if they don't remember dragging the parlor rug out to the clothes line and then beating away until the dust stopped flying. Uncle Ebenezer says he developed plenty of arm muscle that way every spring when he was a boy. He says he thinks he was also responsible for bringing old-age on early to several parlor rugs in his home. I shouldn't be surprised. Beating was in reality a very expensive method of cleaning. It dislodged more dust and dirt than ordinary sweeping, but it wore out the rugs at the same time.

The carpet sweeper is convenient to use when removing surface litter, particularly in the dining room. The broom will take up more dust but is likely to spread it far and wide in the atmosphere. The easiest and most thorough cleaning can be done with a reliable vacuum cleaner. Properly adjusted and properly handled, it will draw out more dust than the most vigorously used broom. And it won't harm the rug as hard beating does.

Here are a few suggestions about using your cleaner to the best advantage. Run it back and forth with the nap of the rug, not against it. Keep the dust bag clean. Some manufacturers advise emptying it every week and replacing it every year. The bag should never be washed, and, if it is made of rubberized fabric, it should never be stored in a warm place. Even if you are a most energetic housekeeper, remember that the cleaner never needs to be pushed rapidly. That will just tire you out and keep the cleaner from doing the best work.

If the cleaner has a brush, that must also be kept clean for good service. Brush out the dirt and clip the threads and hairs with shears. The same care should be taken with your carpet sweeper. Long threads or hairs that are badly tangled in the brush can often be removed with a button-hook.

When something is spilled on the rug, prompt attention may save a bad spot. A stain which has been allowed to dry on, or which has dirt ground in it, is likely to be very difficult to remove. Don't rub up the freshly spilled liquid from the rug, as this is likely to drive it farther into the fabric. Instead, cover it at once with something that will absorb it---cornmeal, talcum powder, or blotting paper torn into bits. Such absorbent material will take up the moisture and prevent its spreading. Then remove the stain as you would from any other fabric.

But I'm afraid I'm beginning to wander a bit from my subject. Let's see. We were discussing what makes rugs wear out before their time. Dirt, as we have said, is one reason. Rough or wrong cleaning methods that break the fibers is another reason. Then there is the floor underneath. The floor may make a great deal of difference in the life of a rug. Nails or knots in the wood may protrude and cause wear on the warp or back of the rug. Wide spaces between the boards make sharp ridges that also cause wear. If your floor is uneven, it will pay you to use a carpet underlay, lining or padding for protection.

Sometimes rugs wear out because they stay too long in the same spot. It is a good idea to move them about from time to time, so that they will occupy a different position in the room. This will distribute the wear most evenly.

The hardest wear, you know, comes near a door-way or a much-used chair. By moving the rug occasionally, the hard wear will not be constantly centered in one spot. Shifting is also a simple way of preventing uneven fading. Carpet colors should be, but not always are, sun-proof and light-proof.

I must not forget to mention sharp table legs and rough castors as causes of wear and tear. Small round standards of glass or wood are made to fit the bottom of furniture legs and are good investments if you wish to save holes in your rugs.

Let me say just one more thing about bulges. Beside the bulges in an uneven, imperfect floor, there are frequently other things under the rugs, like electric cords. Though the cords cause only slight bulges, walking over them may eventually wear the nap away.

The moral of our story today is: Good care and kind treatment pays in longer life for floor coverings.

Oh, my, I almost forgot something that I especially wanted to mention today. Several people have asked me about putting rugs away for the summer. If the house is being closed, rugs are often packed away. Some housekeepers also put away the large heavy rugs to lighten the housework in summer; and to make the house look cooler. If you store your rugs, think of moths and make preparations against them. Put the rugs away clean. Roll them up with naphthalene flakes or some other substance that will protect them against moths and wrap them carefully in thick, unbroken paper with not a chink anywhere for a moth to get in. Cold storage is another way to store rugs secure from moths.

Tomorrow: "A Made-Over Meal for Saturday Night."

